Province of British Columbia

BC PARKS

2015/16 ANNUAL REPORT

BRITISH COLUMBIA BC Parks

Cover Photo: Monashee Provincial Park, Thompson Cariboo Region
Photo Credit: Ian Robert Reid photography

Monashee Provincial Park protects substantial stands of old growth cedar, spruce and hemlock. Lush green forests grace the valley bottoms and, in the spring, alpine meadows blossom with a colourful array of wildflowers. The park is also known for some of the oldest rock formations in western Canada.

Peters and Margie Lakes sparkle beneath 2,697 metre high Mount Fosthall, which is the highest peak in the park and part of the rugged Monashee Range of snow-capped peaks that surround the park. Lucky visitors may get a glimpse of the rare mountain caribou or wolverine or the much more common mule deer and pikas. This undeveloped mountain wilderness is a wonderful adventure for both experienced, backcountry hikers and willing beginners.

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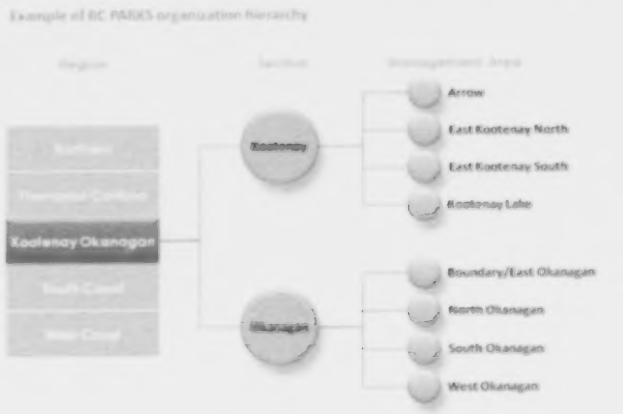
About BC Parks

BC's (BC's) protected areas system is a public trust with exceptional opportunities for conservation, outdoor recreation, education, scientific study and social interactions.

Who we are

BC Parks is part of the Ministry of Environment. BC Parks' services and management are delivered through a central office in Victoria and five regions located throughout the province. The regions are subdivided into 11 sections. The sections are further sub-divided into 49 management areas (MAs).

Most back country facilities and services are provided and maintained by BC Parks staff. Most frontcountry facilities and services are managed by contractors, called Park Operators (POs). Some POs manage one park and others manage a grouping or bundle of parks in a specific location. POs provide onsite management, service and routine maintenance in day use areas and campgrounds. Standards for this service are set by BC Parks.



What we manage

BC's protected areas system provides for the protection and maintenance of important natural and cultural values, while providing outstanding outdoor recreation opportunities.

Protected areas contain some of the best representative elements of BC's natural and cultural heritage. They include ecological reserves, provincial parks, conservancies, recreation areas and protected areas established under the *Environment and Land Use Act*.

As of March 31, 2016, the system managed by BC Parks included 1,029 protected lands, covering approximately 14.4% of the province or approximately 14 million hectares (ha). In comparison to the US and Parks Canada, BC's protected areas system is one of the largest protected areas systems in North America and one of the largest provincial/territorial systems in Canada.

Protected Areas System Administered by BC Parks (as of March 31, 2016)

Designation	Number	Area (hectares)
Ecological Reserves	148	160,456
Class A Parks	627	10,510,204
Class B Parks	2	3,778
Class C Parks	13	484
Conservancies	156	2,998,504
Environment and Land Act designations	81	383,892
Recreation Areas	2	5,929
Total		

What are...?

Ecological reserves are reserved for ecological purposes including areas: for research and education; that maintain representative examples of natural ecosystems; that serve as examples of ecosystems modified by human activities and offer an opportunity to study their recovery; that protect rare or endangered flora and fauna; and, unique examples of botanical, zoological or geological phenomena. While most ecological reserves are open to the public, they are not established for outdoor recreation and no extractive activities are allowed.

Class A parks are lands dedicated to the preservation of their natural environment for the inspiration, use and enjoyment of the public. Development in a Class A park is limited to that which is necessary for the maintenance of its recreational values. Activities such as grazing, hay cutting and other uses (except commercial logging, mining or hydroelectric development) that existed at the time the park was established may be allowed to continue in certain parks.

Class B parks differ from Class A parks in that a Class B park may permit a broader range of activities and uses provided that such uses are not detrimental to the recreational values of the park.

Class C parks differ from Class A parks in that a Class C park must be managed by a local board. They are generally small parks providing local recreational amenities.

Conservancies are set aside for: (a) the protection and maintenance of their biological diversity and natural environments; (b) the preservation and maintenance of social, ceremonial and cultural uses of First Nations; (c) the protection and maintenance of their recreational values; and (d) development or use of natural resources in a manner consistent with the purposes of (a), (b) and (c) above. Conservancies provide for a wider range of low impact, compatible economic opportunities than Class A parks, however, commercial logging, mining and hydroelectric power generation (other than local run-of-the-river projects) are prohibited.

Protected areas are established by order in council under the *Environment and Land Use Act* and generally have one or more existing or proposed activities that are not usually allowed in a park (e.g., proposed industrial road, pipeline, transmission line or communication site). Allowable activities are determined by specific provisions when the area is established as well as relevant sections of the *Park Act* and regulations.

Recreation areas are set aside for public recreational use. The majority of these areas were established to allow a mineral resource evaluation under a time-limited tenure; no other industrial activities are permitted. All current recreation areas are being evaluated to determine if they should become fully protected or returned to integrated resource management lands.

Managing the System

Legislative Framework

The provincial protected areas system is governed by several pieces of legislation.

Ecological Reserve Act

This *Act* provides for the establishment and administration of ecological reserves. Ecological reserves are established by inclusion to the schedules of the *Protected Areas of BC Act* or by Order in Council under the *Act*.

Park Act

This *Act* provides for the establishment, classification and management of parks, conservancies and recreation areas. Class A parks and conservancies are established by inclusion in the schedules to the Protected *Areas of BC Act* or by Order in Council under the *Act*. Class B and C parks and recreation areas are established by Order in Council under the *Act*.

Protected Areas of BC Act

This *Act* consolidates in its schedules most of the Class A parks, conservancies and ecological reserves for the purposes of the *Park Act* and the *Ecological Reserve Act*. The *Act* ensures that the boundaries of these areas cannot be modified to remove lands except by an Act of the Legislature.

Environment and Land Use Act

This *Act* empowers a Land Use Committee of Cabinet to ensure all aspects of the preservation and maintenance of the natural environment are fully considered in the administration of land use and resource development. Orders can be made respecting the environment or land use, including the establishment of protected areas. The *Act* is under the administration of the Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.

Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing Act

Only sections 5(b), and 6 and 9 relate to the portfolio of the Minister of Environment. Section 5(b) describes one of the functions of the Ministry as being to encourage outdoor recreation, establish parks and conserve the natural scenic and historic features of BC. Section 6 provides the Minister with the authority, for the purposes of the *Act*, to enter into agreements (subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council) with the Government of Canada, the government of another province, or with any other person or a municipality. Section 9 gives authority to the minister to dispose of, acquire and manage land for ministry purposes.

Ministry of Environment Act

This *Act* gives the Minister authority to acquire property and to enter into agreements with other governments with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Special Accounts Appropriation and Control Act

This Act establishes special accounts, which are accounts in the general fund of the consolidated revenue fund where the authorization to expend money from the account is located in an Act other than a *Supply Act*. Section 9.6 of the *Act* deals with the Park Enhancement Fund. This section details what monies can be added to the special account and how the monies can be used by the Minister of Environment to enhance volunteer, research and other opportunities in parks and protected areas.

Designations and Changes to the System

Changes to BC's protected areas system continue the ongoing process of designing and implementing a system that provides for improved protection of environmental and cultural values, providing recreational experiences and providing economic opportunities to communities.

No new lands were added to BC's protected areas system in 2015/16. 63.5 ha were removed from Anhluut'ukwsim Laxmihl Angwinga'asanskwhl Nisga'a [a.k.a. Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park] and re-established as Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Corridor Protected Area (No. 2) under the *Environment and Land Use Act*. Bright Angel Park was cancelled as a Class C park and the lands leased by the Province to the Cowichan Valley Regional District for regional park purposes.

Changes to BC's Protected Areas System in 2015/16

Area Added to Existing Protected Areas	Area (ha)
*No lands added in 2015/16	
Area Removed from Existing Protected Areas	**Area (ha)**
Anhluut'ukwsim Laxmihl Angwinga'asanskwhl Nisga'a (a.k.a. Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park)	63.5
Bright Angel Park	22.3

Land Acquisitions

From time to time, the provincial government acquires lands for protected areas through purchase, donation, and/or exchange to fill gaps in the protected areas system. Solutions that include partnerships contribute to successful projects.

In 2015/16, 83.7 ha of lands, valued at approximately $700,000, were acquired for protected area purposes. Acquired properties include:

- 3.7 ha [two properties] along the Cowichan River on Vancouver Island, adjacent to Cowichan River Park, include streamside habitat with a maple forest grove and rare wildflowers.
- 45 ha on the Similkameen River, adjacent to the South Okanagan Grasslands Protected Area, feature a rare riparian floodplain and upland grasslands habitat for species at risk.
- 35 ha known as the Woods Family property, adjacent to Syringa Park near Castlegar, provides habitat for bighorn sheep.

Cowichan River Acquisition

Land Acquisitions	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Land purchase value	*$6,325,000*	*$436,000*	*$707,000*

Success Story:

The parcels acquired in 2015/16 were a partnership initiative with the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) to ensure the continued protection of several ecologically sensitive properties formerly owned by The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC). The Province has committed $1 million and will assume ownership of several of the 26 conservation properties transferred from TLC to the NCC. The NCC's agreement with TLC required a cash contribution to assist in repayment of TLC's creditors, and the Province's contribution supports these efforts. Additional properties will be acquired as part of this partnership.

Similkameen River Pines acquisition

Woods Family Property acquisition

Management Planning

A management plan is the most important document for a protected area. The management plan sets out the high-level framework from which all subsequent protected area management, planning and implementation will take place.

The Strategic Management Planning Policy for Ecological Reserves, Parks, Conservancies, Protected Areas and Recreation Areas was approved by the Assistant Deputy Minister in July 2013. This policy requires that a management plan be prepared and kept current for every protected area in the BC Parks' system. This performance measure (% of protected areas with approved management plans) is reported on annually.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	***2013/14***	***2014/15***	***2015/16***
Percentage of protected areas with valid approved management plans	*70%*	*70%*	*71%*

In 2015/16, six new management plans and one management plan amendment were approved:

- First conservancy management plan in the Atlin-Taku Land Use Planning Area: Monarch Mountain/A Xéegi Deiyi Conservancy
- First conservancy management plan on the Mid-Central Coast: Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy
- Conservancy management plan for a North Coast conservancy: K'Nabiyaaxl/Ashdown Conservancy
- Management plans for two Cariboo-Chilcotin Land-Use Plan Goal 2 areas with important natural features: Quesnel Lake Park and Dragon Mountain Park
- A new management plan (replacing a 1986 plan) for a park that is a part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks UNESCO World Heritage Site: Hamber Park, and,

How it's measured:

Only 'valid' management plans are included. Management plans are considered to be 'valid' if the management plan still provides adequate strategic direction and guidance for the management of a protected area.

- An amendment to a North Coast conservancy management plan to make the management plan a collaborative plan with the Gitga'at First Nation (previously approved only by BC Parks): Lax Kwil Dziidz/Fin Conservancy.

This brings the percentage of protected areas with valid management direction to 71%.

As of March 31, 2016, there were 69 active management planning projects across the province. Active projects represent approximately 23% of the 299 protected areas without approved management direction. In 2015/16, there were also draft management plans released for public review for eight protected areas. All management planning processes include a minimum of a 30-day web-based public review of the draft management plan.

Management Plan Policy

The *Strategic Management Planning Policy for Ecological Reserves, Parks, Conservancies, Protected Areas and Recreation Areas* was approved by the Assistant Deputy Minister in July 2013. This policy requires that a management plan be prepared and kept current for every protected area in the BC Parks' system. This performance measure (% of protected areas with approved management plans) is reported on annually.

Tools to Assist Management Planning

Several management planning tools are now available to assist BC Parks planners, planning teams and partners to develop consistent and high quality protected area management plans.

The toolkit includes four guidelines and three templates:

- BC Parks Protected Area Management Planning Manual
- BC Parks Guide to Writing Management Plans
- BC Parks Management Plan Review and Approval Guide
- Zoning Framework
- BC Parks Management Plan Template
- BC Parks Management Plan Amendment Template
- Management Planning Project Plan Template

Management Plans Approved in 2015/16	**Protected Area(s)**
Monarch Mountain/A Xéegi Deiyi Conservancy	Monarch Mountain/A Xéegi Deiyi Conservancy
Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy	Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy
K'Nabiyaaxl/Ashdown Conservancy	K'Nabiyaaxl/Ashdown Conservancy
Quesnel Lake Park	Quesnel Lake Park
Dragon Mountain Park	Dragon Mountain Park
Hamber Park	Hamber Park
Draft Management Plans Released for Public Review in 2015/16	**Protected Area(s)**
Beaver Valley Park	Beaver Valley Park
Quesnel Lake Park	Quesnel Lake Park
Dragon Mountain Park	Dragon Mountain Park
Muḵn / Brooks Peninsula Provincial Park and Hisnit/Power River Watershed Protected Area	Muḵn / Brooks Peninsula Provincial Park and Hisnit/Power River Watershed Protected Area
Wakes Cove Park	Wakes Cove Park
Syringa Park	Syringa Park
Skaha Bluffs Park	Skaha Bluffs Park

**As of March 31, 2016, there were 69 active management planning projects across the province.*

Intergovernmental Relations

BC Parks works with federal, territorial and provincial governments on areas of mutual interest in the planning and management of protected areas.

Canadian Parks Council

The Canadian Parks Council (CPC) is an organization consisting of senior managers representing Canada's national, provincial and territorial parks agencies. BC Parks is an active participant on the Council. The Council provides a Canada-wide forum for inter-governmental information sharing and action on protected areas that:

- promotes excellence in protected areas planning and management,
- advocates protected areas values and interests, and
- encourages cooperation and provides support

Marine Protected Areas

BC Parks works with other provincial agencies and the federal government on marine protected areas establishment, including proposals for a National Marine Conservation Area Reserve in the southern Strait of Georgia (Parks Canada), a National Marine Wildlife Management Area around the Scott Islands (Canadian Wildlife Service), a Marine Protected Area in Hecate Strait/Queen Charlotte Sound for glass sponge reefs (Department of Fisheries and Oceans), a Marine Protected Area at Race Rocks, offshore from Victoria (Department of Fisheries and Oceans), and the Marine Planning Partnership for the North Pacific Coast (Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations). These proposals are at various stages of development, but all of them require the cooperation of provincial agencies and federal government departments.

Canadian Heritage Rivers

Representing BC, BC Parks participates in the Canadian Heritage Rivers program, which recognizes Canada's outstanding examples of river heritage. Three rivers in BC are designated as Canadian Heritage Rivers: the Fraser, the Cowichan and the Kicking Horse (managed by Parks Canada). This year, the program continues to focus on a range of nationwide activities including updating procedures for monitoring the natural, cultural, and recreational values of Canadian Heritage Rivers and continuously engaging and supporting the host of river managers and stewardship groups that conserve, promote, and monitor Heritage Rivers across Canada.

Visitor Experiences

BC's incredible system of protected areas offers experiences as unforgettable and diverse as the province's natural landscapes. Travelling alone or with friends or family, BC Parks has opportunities for visitors of all ages, in all seasons, to explore and enjoy. Accessibility to parks experiences vary and they can be found by land and water, including: picnicking, wilderness camping and backcountry cabins, winter sports, cycling, wildlife viewing and hiking, boating, fishing and swimming – an adventure awaits everyone.

Overnight Accommodations

Vehicle-accessible frontcountry campgrounds, often surrounded by forested habitat and in close proximity to beaches and trails, provide campers with easy access to a variety of nature and recreation-based activities. POs maintain BC Parks' facilities and services in over 250 campgrounds and day use areas and often provide visitors with complementary amenities such as equipment rentals, interpretive programs and small concessions. In some locations, visitors arriving by bicycle will find walk-in campsites and boaters needing vessel camping can tie up to mooring buoys or docks. Those looking for an alternative to camping may enjoy some 'cabin' comforts, available in select frontcountry campgrounds such as Wells Gray or Kikomun Creek Parks or the Olympic Legacy Cabins in Porteau Cove Park.

Designated group campsites, such as those found in Alice Lake, French Beach, Paul Lake, Kokanee Creek Parks and in many other frontcountry locations, can accommodate school groups or large gatherings of family and friends (15 people or more) in one site. Facilities vary from shelters to picnic tables, to fire pits and wood burning stoves, to additional services such as barbeques and propane lights.

A variety of backcountry camping opportunities are offered throughout the province, including in Stone Mountain and Golden Ears Parks and Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage Park. In some locations, facilities such as tent pads, picnic tables and food caches are provided, while other backcountry campsites are in truly wilderness settings without any facilities. Some campsites are accessed by foot, horse, ATV, snowmobile or are in marine environments such as Desolation Sound and Shuswap Lake Marine Parks and are accessed by boat. Vessel camping in the backcountry is often found in protected anchorages, with few or no facilities.

Backcountry cabins and huts are found in a variety of environments such as in the Height of the Rockies, Tantalus and Wapiti parks, often throughout the four seasons, and range from basic shelters to more equipped accommodations. Facilities and services range from sleeping bunks and pit toilets, to kitchens, woodstoves, wash sinks, and propane lights and heat. Visitors seeking a base for hiking, ski touring, climbing or just enjoying the view can experience the backcountry in rustic comfort.

Day Use Opportunities

Day use activities, either as part of the camping experience or as a destination event, are plentiful across the province. Waterfront picnic areas provide a variety of beach activities for everyone to enjoy while forested, grassland, and alpine environments offer other day use opportunities ranging from the relaxed to the challenging. Visitors can swim, paddle, or ski while children of all ages can explore tide-pools, climb adventure playgrounds or take part in a nature program with Jerry the Moose, the BC Parks Mascot. Others may learn to fish, photograph the local flora or hike one of the many trails designed for every fitness level.

Designated group picnic sites are available in several frontcountry locations, such as Martha Creek, Rathtrevor Beach and West Lake Parks. Facilities and services range from large, open shelters and change houses to barbeques, playgrounds and nearby sandy beaches.

BC's parks and protected areas also offer unique experiences thanks to the natural, cultural and historic features found throughout the province. A visitor can climb the granite cliffs of the Stawamus Chief, horseback ride the Dewdney (heritage) Trail, tour the Nisga'a basalt flows, cycle the Kettle Valley Railway, or scuba-dive with the Emerald Princess in Mermaid Cove, to name just a few adventures.

Visitors preferring not to 'go it on their own' will find a variety of commercial recreation companies operating throughout the province. These authorized adventure tourism specialists may offer overnight accommodations or guide guests on hiking, climbing, skiing or river-rafting trips, kayak/canoe tours or big game and fishing excursions. For more information on where these operations are available in BC Parks, **click here** and search by Permit Type – 'Commercial Recreation,' or visit the BC Parks website at: http://apps.nrs.gov.bc.ca/pub/pae/active-permits

BC Parks Reservation Service

The Discover Camping™ Reservation Service provides visitors with peace of mind when planning their favorite experiences in BC Parks. The reservation service allows campers to book their spot and be assured that a site that meets their needs is waiting for them upon arrival. Discover Camping also allows people to look up campsite features, view pictures and manage their bookings.

The Discover Camping Reservation Service has been in place since 1996. It is a user-pay model to ensure it is not subsidized by taxpayers. The reservation, change and cancellation charges remain at 1996 pricing.

The objectives of the reservation system are to:

- offer consumers certainty and peace of mind,
- provide fair and consistent access to campsites, and
- improve business efficiencies and customer service.

In 2015, the BC Parks Discover Camping Reservation Service offered local, national and international visitors access to campsites in 99 provincial parks, in 115 frontcountry campgrounds, including: 72 group campsites, two cabins, over 5,500 frontcountry campsites and two limited entry backcountry wilderness experiences (Bowron Lake Canoe Circuit and the Berg Lake Trail in Mount Robson Park) for a total of over 5,600 individual resources on the reservation system. Approximately 48% of BC Parks' camping opportunities were "First Come, First Served."

Four new frontcountry campgrounds were added to the Discover Camping Reservation Service in 2015: Whiskers Point, Summit Lake, Juniper Beach and Kootenay Lake (Davis Creek campground) Provincial Parks. Also, two new campgrounds were added (Robson River in Mount Robson Park and the frontcountry campground in Kentucky Alleyne Provincial Park).

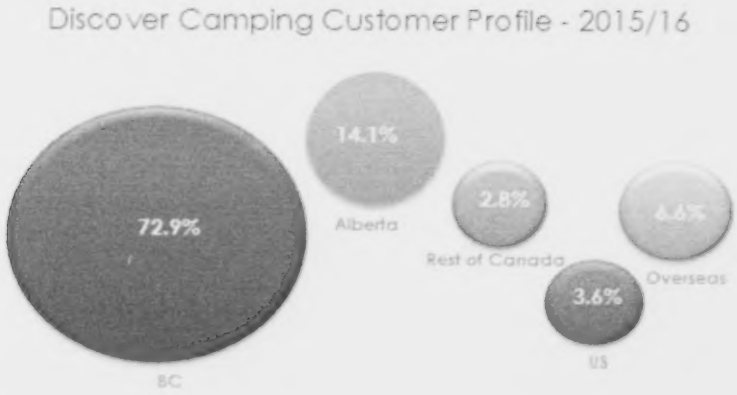
More than 158,000 reservations were made through Discover Camping in 2015 (a 16% increase from the 2014 season). Ninety–six percent of the reservations were made online while four percent were made through the Call Centre. Approximately six percent of the overall Internet transactions occurred over the mobile interface. 72.9% of all reservations made in 2015 originated from BC

Enhancements to the reservation service include:

- the ability to book up to three reservations at one time (shopping cart model)
- a first-come-first-service inventory availability tool
- improved refund request guidelines and process on BC Parks' website and,
- reminder emails for customers to ensure they had a chance to change or cancel their reservations prior to any penalties applying.

BC Parks continually improves the reservation service by conducting annual reviews, reviewing customer feedback and by increasing the number of campgrounds and sites on the system, where appropriate.

To view the Discover Camping website, please **click here** or visit the Discover Camping website at **https://secure.camis.com/Discovercamping/**



For more information about BC Parks' reservation service and its policies, please visit: BC Parks Reservation Service or to make a reservation, visit Discover Camping.

BC Parks Backcountry Registration System

BC Parks introduced the ability to purchase backcountry permits through the Discover Camping Registration System in 2011. The backcountry registration system is for backcountry and marine campsites only and is not used for frontcountry (vehicle accessible) camping reservations. There are no service fees to purchase backcountry permits online; it is simply a convenient way to prepay for permits prior to arriving in the park.

The Discover Camping Registration System sold over 6,400 permits, for approximately 12,000 overnight stays, in 30 provincial parks during 2015.

For more information about the Backcountry registration system:
http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/registration/

Attendance

Park attendance information is used by BC Parks to track visitation trends, assist in evaluation of performance, and guide planning for the operation and management of BC's protected areas system.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2014/15	2015/16	Variance	% Change
Day Use Visits	18,573,802	20,882,051	2,308,249	12.4%
Camping Visits	2,572,617	2,745,449	172,832	6.7%
Boating Visits	204,375	186,098	-18,277	-8.9%
Total Attendance	**21,350,794**	**23,813,598**	**2,462,804**	**11.5%**

What it means:

The number of visitors to provincial protected areas is used to measure the contribution of protected areas to the government's priorities of healthy communities, tourism and economic development. Park attendance is affected by the availability and quality of facilities and services but is also strongly influenced by external factors such as local weather conditions, transportation infrastructure (e.g., highway construction), the value of the Canadian dollar and general tourism trends.

Park attendance continued to rise in 2015/16 with an 11.5% increase over 2014/15. This was driven in part by good weather and increasing use of the Discover Camping reservation services.

How attendance is measured:

BC Parks tracks attendance through campground registrations, trail and traffic counters, and visual counts. In order to have standard, comparable information, all "visits" are stated in person days (so one person staying for two days counts as two "visits"). Average party sizes are applied to daily counts of cars, boats, camping parties, etc., to obtain the number of actual visits. Average party sizes are based on detailed party composition information collected through visitor surveys.

Visitor Satisfaction

BC Parks is committed to ensuring visitors have a safe, fun experience in campgrounds with clean, well-run facilities and services.

The BC Parks Visitor Survey is conducted each year in select parks to get a better understanding of park visitors' views, needs, and experiences in provincial parks. Survey data is used to assess performance, identify visitation trends, inform capital planning, and guide decision-making in a number of areas. The "satisfaction rating" is the percentage of respondents that assigned a score of either "Above Average" or "Excellent" to a given service. 2015 satisfaction scores are summarized in the table to the right.

Overall, respondents reported high satisfaction with their camping experiences. In particular, visitors were highly satisfied with the customer service provided by POs (82% for "Responsiveness of staff to visitor concerns"; 88% for "Friendliness and courtesy of staff"). High scores were also given for maintenance of grounds and facilities. BC Parks will work with POs to maintain a high overall level of service and improve areas of deficiency identified by survey respondents to ensure visitors continue to be satisfied with their BC Parks camping experiences.

Improving Visitor Facilities

Public recreation needs constantly change and evolve. BC Parks strives to continue to meet the evolving needs of its visitors and maintain their high satisfaction with its performance.

Over the past five years, BC Parks has invested over $60 million in buildings and land improvements across the province. Projects include the construction and/or replacement of a variety of campground and day use facilities, such as campsites, toilet and shower buildings, water and sewer systems, roads, trails, picnic shelters, boat launches and wildlife viewing platforms. The total replacement value of all facilities investments in BC's protected areas system is approximately $700 million.

BC Parks Capital Facilities Program Investments

Year	Expenditure Amount
2013/14	$12,983,101
2014/15	$13,392,335
2015/16	$13,797,427

Success Story: Bamberton Park Service Centres

In BC Parks, the term "service centre" describes a "one-stop shop" for campground visitors' use of toilets, gathering potable water, and dropping off trash and recyclables. Service Centres were recently installed at Bamberton Park, and efforts are being made at other BC Parks locations to consolidate toilets, water and trash/recycling facilities into central locations.

The benefits of these service centres include improved accessibility and convenience for park visitors, as well as improved efficiencies for park maintenance operations. Another improvement included an upgraded picnic area with improved wheelchair accessibility.

Success Story: Liard Hot Springs Toilet Building Retrofit Project

Liard Hot Springs Park is situated in the north eastern corner of BC on BC Highway 97, approximately a four-hour drive from Fort Nelson. The park's famous hot springs is open year round.

The existing toilet building is situated in an environmentally-sensitive area and is accessible by means of a boardwalk raised above the natural level of the marsh. None of the facilities at the hot springs location are connected to any power or water source, and therefore are not serviceable by conventional means.

To address the unique requirements of this project location, a new Collect and Haul system was installed, which enables waste to be safely removed from the site to a disposal location at the park service yard while adhering to the constraints imposed by the Park's sensitive ecosystem. Gravity is used at all stages of the process for collection and disposal of waste.

Concurrently with design and construction of the Collect and Haul system, the toilet facility also received an architectural upgrade to not only accommodate the new system but also connect in style and material choice with the upgraded deck and change house facility.

Public Safety

BC Parks strives to provide high quality and safe recreation opportunities for visitors.

Hazard Trees

The objective of the hazard tree program is to promote the conservation of wildlife trees and associated stand-level biodiversity in a safe and operationally efficient manner.

Forests are an important part of the recreational and inspirational experience offered by BC Parks. As trees age, they may become weakened by forest pests, wildfire, wind, snow or lightning and can pose dangers to visitors. However, these trees also provide valuable habitat for wildlife. Certified assessors can recognize existing and potential wildlife trees know how to integrate them into protected areas management and are able to distinguish between safe and dangerous trees. The trees are removed in a way that minimizes the environmental impact to the surrounding habitat.

During 2015/16, BC Parks spent approximately $57,127 to remove trees that posed a safety hazard to visitors in campgrounds, day use areas and along roads and trails in BC's parks and protected areas.

Fuel Management

Living in or adjacent to forests is highly desirable; however risks from potential wildfires exist in such areas. BC Parks endeavours to be good neighbours by reducing these risks through prescribed fire and tree removal to thin forests in interface areas.

Prescribed fire is used by BC Parks both to reduce forest fuels and restore ecological integrity. The method is a controlled application of fire to a specific land area to accomplish management objectives. These fires are managed in such a way as to minimize the emission of smoke and maximize the benefits to the site. Fire is a natural, normal process in many ecosystems and is necessary to maintain a healthy forest. Many plants and animals have adapted to fire and some actually depend on it. In 2015/16, BC Parks treated over 195 ha of protected area lands with prescribed fire in two protected areas: Syringa Park, in the Kootenay Region and Churn Creek, in the Cariboo Region.

Compliance and Enforcement

Park Rangers patrol parks and protected areas across the province, making contact with thousands of visitors each year. In most cases, park rangers use education and information as their primary tool to generate voluntary compliance with park and protected areas rules and regulations.

In 2015/16, the most common offences under the *Park Act* and Park, Conservancy and Recreation Area Regulation were related to domestic animals (unrestrained or in closed parks), failing to obey signs, guiding without a permit, unauthorized activities (e.g. illegal use of vegetation) and trespass. Park Rangers also enforce other provincial statutes in protected area such as the *Wildlife Act*, *Motor Vehicle Act*, *Liquor Control and Licensing Act*. In 2015/16 the *Off-road Vehicle* (ORV) *Act* was introduced replaced the *Motor Vehicle (All Terrain) Act*. This new legislation is directly applicable to the management of motorized recreation in parks and protected areas. Across the Natural Resource Sector, enforcement officers including Park Rangers took a "public education" approach in the first year of *ORV Act* focusing on generating voluntary compliance for the new registration and licensing requirements.

Park Rangers exercise a significant degree of discretion to resolving compliance matters. To generate compliance, approaches include public relations, warnings, evictions, violation tickets, *Park Act* orders, and court prosecution. This year's agency highlight was delivering Verbal Judo Train-the-Trainer course. BC Parks trained 12 staff as instructors and other agencies that attended training were the Conservation Officer Service (COS), Natural Resource Officers (NROs) as well as five PO companies. BC Parks continued to work closely with various agencies to ensure the protection of the public and natural and cultural values contained in the protected areas we manage. In 2015/16, Park Rangers were engaged in joint compliance and enforcement activities, such as campfire ban enforcement, long weekend compliance and enforcement projects and monitoring illegal snowmobiling inside and outside protected areas.

Engaging the Public

Community Engagement

In the context of rapidly changing demographics and increasingly diverse communities across the province, BC Parks aims to stay relevant and connect with the public in meaningful ways.
Throughout 2014/15, BC Parks was involved with community partnerships, youth engagement initiatives and public events.

Great Canadian Shoreline Clean Up

Shoreline Clean-up at Bamberton Provincial Park

Each year, BC Parks supports community groups and volunteers who lead shoreline clean up events within the provincial parks protected areas system. One of BC Parks' ongoing partnerships is with the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup initiative, which is co-managed by the Vancouver Aquarium and the World Wildlife Fund-Canada (WWF). In 2015, the program was expanded to include events throughout the year. BC Parks supported four different community groups who organized cleanups in the following protected areas: Naikoon Provincial Park, Rugged Point Marine Park, Christina Lake Park and Bamberton Park. Other Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup events occurred in or adjacent to BC's provincial parks and protected areas through community partners sponsoring events in pre-approved areas.

Youth Engagement

Inspiring BC's next generation of protected area users.

Get Outside BC is a collaborative youth leadership project that aims to strengthen youth attachment to BC's protected areas by empowering young leaders across the province. The project is a partnership with BC Parks, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society BC Chapter (CPAWS-BC), Mountain Equipment Co-op, and the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada. 2015 marks its fifth successful year. Parks Canada and the Haber Foundation also supported *Get Outside BC*.

Participants for the *Get Outside BC* project were recruited from six regional hubs across BC: Vancouver, Nanaimo, Kelowna, Kimberley, Prince Rupert and province-wide. In total, 28 youth ranging in age from 13-18 participated in Phase I of *Get Outside BC 2015*. During Phase II they collectively reached over 200 people during their outdoor community events. Eighteen youth leaders were able to participate in Phase III, where they shared their learned experiences and celebrate their successes.

The purpose of the project is to connect youth to the outdoors in a meaningful and sustainable way by giving them a sense of purpose and the capacity to inspire others to spend more time in the outdoors. The goal of the three-phased project is to provide both a gateway experience for youth engagement with BC's wilderness and subsequent opportunities for engagement through youth-led follow-up events and the creation of a supportive youth network of natural leaders. Rather than providing a one-time experience, *Get Outside BC* aims to provide youth with the tools and resources to develop an enduring connection to the outdoors and a lifelong identity as a natural leader.

Testimonials:

> ***I learned all about being leader and discovered how much nature meant to me***
> ***-Get Outside BC 2015 Participant***

> ***The most valuable part of the summit was being able to connect with other people passionate about the outdoors from all over BC.***
> ***-Get Outside BC 2015 Participant***

BC Parks Passport Program

In partnership with the POs, Destination BC Visitor Centres and the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC (Learn to Fish Program), BC Parks successfully completed its fifth and final year of the BC Parks Passport Program in 2015.

Participants, while visiting a provincial park or Visitor Centre, received a high quality BC Parks Passport to collect stickers/stamps and receive special prizes. In 2014, approximately 20,000 passports and 4,000 collectible pins were shipped to over 200 participating sites.

The passport program encouraged exploration of BC Parks and Visitor Centres, and participation in Learn to Fish programs by offering fun incentives. The passport also contained trip planning and other useful information about BC Parks programs and services and received sponsorship support from the Camping and RVing BC Coalition and BC Magazine.

Camping and RVing BC Coalition

As a long-term partner of the Camping and RVing BC Coalition, BC Parks continues to contribute to and derive benefit from the coordination of marketing initiatives in this important sector. BC Parks' membership in the coalition allows for leveraged resources in marketing provincial parks and supporting BC Parks' programs. Current members of the non-profit coalition include: the BC Lodging and Campground Association, Destination BC, Recreation Sites and Trails BC, RV Rental Association of Canada, Northern BC Tourism Association, RV Dealers Association of BC, the BC Society of POs, Parks Canada and Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC.

Learn to Fish Program in BC Parks

The Learn to Fish program, run by the non-profit Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC (FFSBC), is a free program designed to attract new anglers to recreational fishing, particularly youth and their families. The program has a strong focus on conservation and increasing environmental awareness. The Learn to Fish program started in BC Parks in 2006 and has expanded every year since.

In 2015 FFSBC, in partnership with Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, Columbia Basin Trust Fund, the Province of BC, and BC Parks, delivered the Learn to Fish program to 4,531 youth and their families with over 130 sessions across 37 provincial parks.

With an annual $5,000 contribution from BC Parks, FFSBC has been able to increase the number of programs offered in provincial parks every year. In 2015, the Learn to Fish program was offered in 15 additional provincial parks.

The partnership between BC Parks and the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC not only teaches youth and their families how to fish and the importance of conservation measures but it also provides a great recreational opportunity in BC's parks.

BC Parks Website

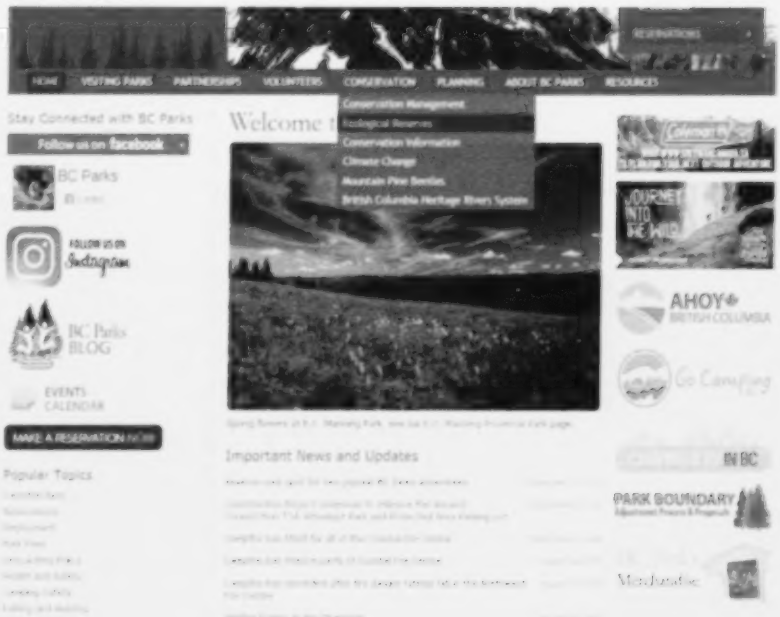
The BC Parks website continues to be one of the most popular websites within the BC government.

How it's measured:

Each unique visit represents one person with a unique address coming to the website. The number of "hits" is often quoted as a web statistic but this is inflated by the number of pages that the visitor clicks (so one visit can involve 10 or more hits).

The BC Parks website provides real-time information about protected areas and serves as an essential communication and information focal point for the public, including:

- protected area information (fees, location maps, activities/facilities available, opening/closing dates and campsite availability dates);
- vital public health and safety messaging (campfire bans/protected area closures, flood alerts, wildlife issues, avalanche alerts, trail reports, and protected area related health alerts);
- policy and user information for the Discover Camping reservation service and direct links to the service;
- opportunities for public review and comment on draft management plans and boundary adjustment processes
- conservation information (natural and cultural values)
- volunteers (volunteer opportunities/initiatives, stories and interactive blog)
- opportunities to support BC's protected areas system through partnerships and sponsorship, and
- events calendar and links to public initiatives and promotional programs.



PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Number of unique visits to BC Parks website	3,471,857	3,691,950	4,223,497
Average visits per day	9,511	10,112	11,539

In 2015, the BC Parks website averaged over 11,530 visits each day, which was an increase of 14% over 2014. The average visitor spends approximately six minutes on the website.

BC Parks Social Media

This year was unique for BC Parks as our social media presence was broadened. The BC Parks Volunteer Blog was expanded to become an organization-wide blog featuring posts on recreation tips and tricks, conservation, ranger information and volunteer groups.

As an organization, BC Parks has a prominent presence on Facebook™. Through Facebook™, there is opportunity to share stories, news that is related to protected areas, community connections and other important user information. BC Parks ran multiple campaigns on Facebook™ to increase the engagement, and likes, on the profile.

How to Become a BC Parks Ranger

We often hear from BC Parks enthusiasts about their interest in becoming a BC Parks Ranger. We're excited to announce that we are now collecting an inventory of interested people who would like to work as a seasonal BC Parks Ranger. What does a BC Parks Ranger do? Being a BC Parks Ranger is a [**Read More**]

Example of a BC Parks blog entry

Facebook™ Example of BC parks Fan Photos Album

Since its inception in 2011, public interaction with the BC Parks Facebook™ page has been overwhelmingly positive, with visitors, staff and other community members posting comments, photos, and stories and engaging with each other and BC Parks. As of March 2016, over 13,258 people 'like'd our page.

Analytics from April 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016:

- *Facebook™:*
  - *97% increase in Facebook™ followers, year over year*
- *Blog:*
  - *634.75% increase in page views, year over year.*

Shared Stewardship

BC Parks offers numerous ways for individuals, community groups, organizations and corporations to support the provincial protected areas system. Contributions made through volunteering, partnerships and donations enhance the protection and management of the province's protected areas system.

BC Parks offers many options for individuals, community groups, organizations and corporations to participate in and support BC Parks. Contributions made through volunteering, partnerships and donations enhance the protection and management of the province's protected areas system.

Individuals, community groups, organizations and corporations across the province volunteer their time, energy and resources to a wide range of activities, including trail building, maintenance, and infrastructure improvements, ecological monitoring and research, and, restoration projects and interpretive programs. In addition to volunteer opportunities, partnerships are encouraged with universities, non-profit organizations, businesses and community groups with a shared interest in protected areas stewardship.

BC Parks also welcomes contributions from individuals, corporations, and the non-profit sector to acquire and protect more land and works very closely with POs and First Nations in managing protected areas.

Volunteers

Every year thousands of dedicated volunteers contribute time, energy and expertise to BC Parks.

The goal of the Volunteer Program is to strengthen BC Parks' capacity by creating connections with both communities and the natural world that result in lasting legacies. BC Parks supports this goal by dedicating resources to continually improve volunteer experiences within our protected areas system by:

- allocating resources to further develop and provide ongoing support for the Volunteer Program
- ensuring volunteers are actively engaged throughout varied aspects of BC Parks' programs, and,
- building awareness, enthusiasm and commitment for volunteering in BC's protected areas.

Since implementing the BC Parks Volunteer Strategy in 2012, BC Parks' Volunteer Program has been improved by:

- reinstating the annual external awards program to recognize volunteers
- building staff and volunteer capacity by to support new Partnership Agreements
- developing an interactive online volunteer community website to provide a resource to individuals looking to get involved in the volunteer community
- establishing a Blog (http://engage.gov.bc.ca/bcparksblog/category/volunteers/) to share stories, showcase our volunteer accomplishments and success stories, and enhance public engagement, and
- launching new Partnership Agreements for volunteer groups that offer Commercial General Liability and Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance.

Support for Volunteer Projects

In 2015/16, BC Parks invested over $100,000 from the Park Enhancement Fund to support over 50 community and volunteer projects across the province. Funding was distributed equally among projects that promote conservation and recreation/visitor experiences in protected areas. This seed money supported a mosaic of individual projects in over 50 parks and protected areas.

Based on feedback from staff and community partners, the success of these projects lies in:

- ability to leverage additional funds and skills of volunteers
- engagement with partnership groups and the public, and,
- enthusiasm of volunteers and project leaders.

Park Enhancement Fund Highlights for 2015/16	
Park Enhancement Fund Investment	$100,000
Total Value of Projects (i.e. leveraged resources)	$530,000+
Number of Citizens Reached	39,916
Community Partners	95+

Snapshot of 2015/2016 Recreation Project

Bugaboo Teens Climbing Camp

The purposes of the Bugaboo Teens Climbing Camp were several: the students would learn mountaineering skills, develop teamwork skills, and learn about career opportunities within the parks system such as an adventure guide, park ranger, tourism sector jobs, photographer, and more.

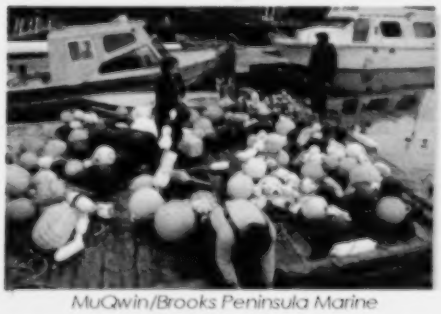
The outcome provided BC Parks with the opportunity to engage directly with youth and help foster the next generation of park enthusiasts in one of our beautifully rugged parks, Bugaboo Provincial Park.

"I felt the trip was an incredible opportunity to offer for local students who may otherwise never get to realize the true value of where we live. Being able to learn and explore under the experienced eyes of the three guides was an incredible chance made possible by this program."

Other partners that helped to make this project a reality included the Alpine Club of Canada, Columbia Basin Trust, Association of Canadian Mountain Guides, and Friends of Bugaboo Park.

Bugaboo Teens Climbing Camp in Bugaboos Provincial Park
Photo credit: Pat Morrow

Snapshot of 2015/2016 Conservation Project



MuQwin/Brooks Peninsula Marine Debris Clean-up

Volunteers travelled to Brooks/MuQwin Peninsula to complete a multi-day cleanup of marine debris and survey new shorelines in the area for future cleanups. A trip to Friendly Cove was completed afterwards, which resulted in new partnerships with the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation. A total of 15 supersacks were filled over a three-day period. The debris was completely removed and towed to Kyuquot for temporary storage. Approximately 200 buoys, three mixed material supersacks, nine plastic foam supersacks and three plastic bottle supersacks were collected and removed from the area.

Organized Volunteer Groups

Organized volunteer groups include legal entities, mainly registered non-profit societies that have entered into Partnership Agreements with BC Parks. They range from small community trail clubs to larger provincial societies, and all have an interest in protecting and improving our park system.

Partnership Agreement Highlights for 2015/16	
Total Number of Active Partnership Agreements	54
Total Number of Volunteers working within a Partnership Agreement	1,236
Total Number of Individual Volunteer Hours from Partnership Agreements	21,432

Individual Volunteers

Individual volunteers vary from members of the public looking to dedicate their time and experience to a BC Park to individuals from abroad interested in conservation projects or gaining field work experience. Some common individual volunteer activities include trail maintenance work, invasive species monitoring and removal, shoreline cleanups and many more.

Volunteer Program Highlights for 2015/16	
Total Number of Individual Volunteers	382
Total Number of Individual Volunteer Hours	6,322
Total Volunteers for 2015/16	
Total Number of Volunteers (groups and individuals)	1,618
Total Number of Volunteer Hours (groups and individuals)	27,754

Volunteer Recognition

BC Parks values the amazing contributions that all volunteers and community partners make every year. To recognize outstanding contributions, BC Parks honours the exceptional contributions that individuals, groups and partners make each year by selecting recipients for the following categories. For 2015, the following individuals, groups and partners were nominated for these annual achievement awards:

Nominations for Volunteer of the Year

- Keith King
- Al Freeze
- Don Scott and David Webb
- Genevieve Singleton

Nominations for Volunteer Group of the Year

- Friends of Cypress Provincial Park
- West Kootenay Eco Society
- Wells Gray Trails Society

Nominations for Community Partner of the Year Nominee

- Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation / Mussel River Guardian Watchmen
- Camping and RVing BC Coalition (Joss Penny, President)

2015 Volunteer of the Year – Genevieve Singleton

Genevieve receiving her award

Volunteer of the Year recipient Genevieve Singleton is a biologist, and has been volunteering with parks in the Cowichan-area for more than 35 years - contributing more than 300 hours per year. Her hard work over the years includes acting as a nature interpreter at Goldstream Provincial Park, leading the "Bring Back the Bluebird" effort in the Cowichan Valley, which included installing nest boxes and recording sightings, and efforts to remove invasive species in Cowichan River Provincial Park. Singleton has also been an ecological reserve warden at Honeymoon Bay and led educational outings for local schoolchildren.

2015 Volunteer Group of the Year – Friends of Cypress Provincial Park

Volunteer Group of the Year recipient Friends of Cypress Provincial Park (FCPP) have long been a driving force behind the protection and stewardship of Cypress Provincial Park, an iconic piece of Vancouver's North Shore mountains. In recent years, FCPP members have spent hundreds of hours on conservation-related work, including native and invasive plant inventory, invasive plant removal, raising awareness of park values and invasive plants, and advocating for strong environmental management in the park.

View of Vancouver from Cypress

The FCPP have also provided opportunities and resources for the public to learn about the park's ecological values. They led guided hikes, produced a brochure highlighting the plants of note in the park, and provide public presentations on the park and its values.

2015 Volunteer Legacy Award – Tim Jones (posthumous award)

The late Tim Jones, Volunteer Legacy Award recipient, is reported to have saved more than 1,600 lives, including those of many park visitors. Over the course of his volunteer service, Jones led the North Shore Search and Rescue team on countless searches in Cypress and Mount Seymour Provincial Parks. Jones was an outspoken advocate on the importance of backcountry preparedness and safety, and was regularly in the media promoting such safety tips. Many of the rescues Jones participated in with North Shore Search and Rescue took place in provincial parks located along the North Shore. In January 2014, Jones died from cardiac arrest while hiking in Mount Seymour Provincial Park.

Tim Jones plaque installed in Mount Seymour

2015 Community Partner of the Year – Camping and RVing BC Coalition

The Camping and RVing BC Coalition (CRVBCC) is a non-profit group raising awareness about the wide range of camping and RV experiences across BC. The Coalition helps enhance visitor experiences by allowing visitors to easily search, plan and book their camping or RV trip in BC through social media, newsletters and mail campaigns. The Coalition promotes BC Parks events, Discover Camping and other BC Parks projects to local and international travelers. Collaboration between Coalition partners, which include Recreation Sites and Trails BC, the BC Lodging and Campgrounds Association, and the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC, has directly helped visitors attend and explore BC's provincial parks.

Kentucky-Alleyne Provincial Park
Photo Credit: Iain Robert Reid Photography

Partnerships and Donations

Contributions made through partnerships and donations enhance the protection and management of the province's protected areas system.

The BC Parks' Partnership and Donation Program is designed to provide opportunities for individual citizens, community groups, non-government agencies and private corporations to work with BC Parks on mutually beneficial projects. Through the Park Enhancement Fund (PEF), BC Parks supporters can donate to specific projects or parks and receive an official tax receipt for their contribution.

While donation amounts vary significantly yearly and cannot be predicted with any accuracy, it is clear that BC Parks is a valuable partner, attracting significant donations since the establishment of the PEF in 2008. Over the last eight years, PEF has received over $2 million from donations and community and corporate partnerships. It is important to note that donations for land acquisition initiatives cannot be deposited into PEF and are not included in the totals below. Please see the table below for figures from the last three years.

Park Enhancement Fund

Park Enhancement Fund Investment Highlights for 2015/16	
Park Enhancement Fund Investment	$100,000
Total Value of Projects (i.e., leveraged resources)	$530,000+
Number of Citizens Reached	39,916+
Community Partners	95+

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	***2013/14***	***2014/15***	***2015/16***
Corporate Partnerships & Sponsorships	*$84,163*	*$46,855*	*$42,910*
Community Partnerships	*$29,350*	*$46,162*	*$19,588*
Donations & Make Your Mark Program	*$147,406*	*$55,048*	*$82,129*
Other (i.e., merchandise)	*$230*	*$2,322*	*$2,781*
Total partnership contributions to the Park Enhancement Fund	***$261,149***	***$150,387***	***$147,408***

BC Parks' Planned Giving Program

BC Parks has been the recipient of numerous bequests (gifts in wills), most of which have been donations of land through the Federal Ecological Gifts Program. In 2012, BC Parks officially launched the Planned Giving Program to provide BC Parks' supporters another option to donate financial securities to the PEF. As well as providing tax benefits to the donor, they also allow donors to support specific projects or parks of their choice, while they are still alive.

Planned gifts are referred to as such because they require more planning, negotiation and counsel than other gifts. For example, donations of securities (stocks or bonds) may require the involvement of legal counsel and financial institutions. In addition, leaving a bequest may require counsel from professional estate planners.

Planned Giving is a method of supporting registered charities and other qualified donees that enables philanthropic individuals to make larger gifts than they could make from their daily income.

Gifts can be specific assets of cash, securities or other property – and can be left to the beneficiary through a bequest, or donated while the donor is still alive.

The Canada Revenue Agency applies significant tax benefits to estates when individuals leave donations (of cash or land) in their wills to organizations permitted to issue official tax receipts. This means less of their estate is taxed and more is left to their chosen beneficiaries.

One example of Planned Giving is this year's donation of $254,000 in financial securities (stocks/bonds) by an individual. The funds were used to upgrade the Mamquam Trail in Garibaldi Provincial Park.

For more information on BC Parks' Planned Giving Program, please click here or visit our website: http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/partnerships/planned-giving/.

Park Operators

Park Operators (POs) provide operational services to maintain and enhance the quality of the visitor experience; the condition of the facilities and the ecological values that support BC's protected areas system.

Since 1986, POs have been managing provincial parks on behalf of BC Parks and maintain a variety of facilities, campgrounds, day-use areas and trail systems around the province. Some POs manage one park while others manage a grouping or bundle of parks within a specific geographic location. The areas operated by POs are still protected under the full authority of the *Park Act*. POs enter into legal Agreements with BC Parks to ensure these areas are managed in compliance with the *Park Act*.

BC Parks works closely with POs to deliver a high quality service to park visitors and to maintain the parks to a high standard. POs are a passionate group of contractors who believe in providing the highest quality of service to ensure all visitors enjoy their outdoor experience. Some of their responsibilities include providing visitors with quality recreational experiences, maintaining and enhancing facilities, and conserving natural, cultural and recreation values. BC has one of the highest quality park systems in the world, and this is reflected and showcased in the work POs do.

2015 Park Operator of the Year – Marnee Allison

The Park Facility Operator of the Year award is presented to a Park Facility Operator who is recognized for excellence in park operations. Criteria reviewed for this award include customer service, community engagement and the relationship with BC Parks.

For 2015, the award was given to Marnee Allison. Marnee has operated Boya Lake Provincial Park for more than 11 years. With boundless energy, Marnee has consistently gone above and beyond BC Parks standards. The recycling centre at the park was the product of Marnee's innovative spirit. Additionally, many visitors have credited Marnee with having the nicest smelling outhouses in the province.

Marnee Allison, Regional Director, Larry Boudreau, and Section Head, Mike Neto, Regional Operations, North,

Passionate about the area, the people living there, and the important role parks play in local communities, Marnee involves community members and First Nations in the management of the

park. At her own initiative, Marnee has put a considerable amount of creative effort into enlightening and educating visitors and the area's youth with engaging interpretation programs.

Marnee exhibits the very best of the qualities that make BC Parks' Operators so great: professionalism, kindness, courtesy, respect and a desire to make every visitor's experience memorable.

Engaging First Nations

BC Parks engages and collaborates with First Nations in a variety of ways and through a range of different initiatives and programs.

As long-time leaders in collaborative working models with First Nations, BC Parks contributes towards lasting reconciliation efforts between the provincial government and First Nations while continuing to meet BC Parks' business needs, including recreational and ecological sustainability.

Interpretive Signs - Naikoon Park

BC Parks has successfully negotiated a broad range of collaborative agreements with First Nations, which allow greater First Nation participation in the management of BC's protected areas. In addition to BC Parks' specific, single agency agreements, BC Parks also contributes to the development and negotiation of broader government agreements, such as strategic engagement, reconciliation and treaty agreements.

In 2015/16, BC Parks staff, across all business areas, were involved in a wide variety of initiatives and discussions with First Nations. Examples of work include:

- *Working with First Nations through established collaborative management agreements for effective park and protected area management*
- *Collaborating with First Nations in the development of management plans to ensure long-term conservation, cultural heritage and recreation objectives*
- *Effectively negotiating with First Nations through specific park and protected area issues or challenges*
- *Seeking opportunities to enhance economic and human well-being through increased involvement of First Nations in park and protected area management.*

Highlights of 2015/16 include growing our partnership and management arrangements with First Nations, such as with the Osoyoos Indian Band. As well, BC Parks is engaged in final agreement treaty negotiations with numerous First Nations for the collaborative management of protected areas.

Conservation Management

Ecological Integrity

Ecological integrity is an important concept that influences protected area management to ensure natural areas are well managed into the future.

BC Parks continues to be committed to the proactive stewardship of ecological integrity. Performance measures focus on the consistent use of conservation and business process tools that have been provided to regional staff.

Ecological integrity occurs when an area or network of areas supports natural ecosystem composition, structure and function and a capacity for self-renewal. It is a complex concept and difficult to measure directly.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2014/15	2015/16
Percentage of BC Parks sections (11) that conducted annual management planning	100	100
Percentage of BC Parks sections (11) that supported the annual management planning process with the use of the Conservation Risk Assessment database	73	100
Percentage of BC Parks MAs (47) that updated information in the Conservation Risk Assessment database	40	45
Number of MAs (47) that added data to the Conservation Risk Assessment database	28	21

BC Parks regional operations are subdivided into sections (11). The sections are further sub-divided into MAs (47). Annual management planning (AMPs) is a business process used to identify and prioritize work projects in a section or MA. AMPs have been standardized across the province and are now required to be completed annually.

The Conservation Risk Assessment (CRA) is a database that catalogues the values and threats in each protected area in the province. It is used as input to many of the planning and evaluation processes in protected area management, including discussions that occur in the annual management planning process. All of the sections supported their AMPs with the use of the CRA database, an increase of 24% from the previous year.

The CRA database is most effective when information is added or updated by regional staff on a continual basis. Twenty-eight areas added data to the CRA database. This is a 5% increase from the previous year. The sections varied significantly in their management of the CRA. The current level of use of CRA may reflect the increasing age of this data system, which would have greater value to staff if upgraded.

SECTION	# OF MAS	# OF MAS THAT UPDATED CRA	% OF MAS THAT UPDATED CRA
Peace	2	1	50
Omineca	4	0	0
Skeena	6	0	0
South Coast – Sea to Sky	3	1	33
South Coast – Lower Mainland	3	2	67
West Coast – Haida Gwaii/South Island	6	4	67
West Coast – Central Coast/North Island	5	1	20
Cariboo	5	4	80
Thompson	5	3	60
Okanagan	4	2	50
Kootenay	4	3	75

Representation:
To the extent that the protected areas system represents the ecosystems in the province, there is some assurance that the majority of species across the province have some level of protection.

The Protected Areas Strategy directed the land use planning tables to represent the biogeoclimatic (BEC) zones within the province in the protected areas system. BEC Zones are broad areas of similar climate, geography and vegetative characteristics. There is currently roughly 14% of the land base in the protected areas system. If all of the 16 BEC zones were represented evenly, they would each have 14% protected. However, there is a new standard brought in by the Convention on Biodiversity, supported by Canada that has identified 17% as the target for protected areas. Already BC has seven of their 16 BEC Zones at or above this level.

The zones:

BAFA	*Boreal Altai Fescue Alpine*	*IDF:*	*Interior Douglas-fir*
BG	*Bunchgrass*	*IMA*	*Interior Mountain-heather Alpine*
BWBS	*Boreal White and Black Spruce*	*MH*	*Mountain Hemlock*
CDF	*Coastal Douglas-Fir*	*MS*	*Montane Spruce*
CMA	*Coastal Mountain-heather Alpine*	*PP*	*Ponderosa Pine*
CWH	*Coastal Western Hemlock*	*SBPS*	*Sub-boreal Pine Spruce*
ESSF	*Englemann Spruce-Subalpine Fir*	*SBS*	*Sub-boreal Spruce*
ICH	*Interior Cedar Hemlock*	*SWB*	*Spruce Willow Birch*

Bio Geo Climatic (BGC) Zone	% of the total BGC Zone area within the province that is protected
BAFA	29
BG	12
BWBS	8
CDF	4
CMA	18
CWH	19
ESSF	17
ICH	10
IDF	5
IMA	29
MH	20
MS	9
PP	5
SBPS	9
SBS	7
SWB	23

< 6% of the BEC zone in the BC protected areas system

> 6%, but not yet 12% of the system Represented Between 12 and 17%

≥ 17% protected, which is the new international goal agreed to by The Convention on Biodiversity with the full participation of Canada (Aichi Target 11)

Climate Change

BC's protected areas system plays a key role in the province's response to climate change.

Great Glacier Park

Climate-induced changes in protected areas are resulting from extreme weather events, droughts, flooding, insect outbreaks, invasive species, coastal erosion and wildfires. More subtle effects are occurring as a result of the gradual increase in temperature (especially in the winter), including shrinking glaciers, rising sea levels, changes to the water cycle and the movement of organisms. These changes, while not dramatic on a day-to-day basis, are affecting the distribution of species and the organization of ecosystems.

An important focus of protected areas management in future years will be in maintaining functioning ecosystems and facilitating the movement of species within and across boundaries.

Large landscape-level processes have always played an important role in sustaining ecosystems. These processes are now recognized as being critical in maintaining the resilience of the natural world. One of the key ways that BC's protected areas system can address these processes is by focussing on protecting large landscapes.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	**2014/15**	**2015/16**
Percentage of **terrestrial** protected areas network* in large landscapes >2,700 km²	61	61
Percentage of **terrestrial** protected areas network in landscapes >1,000 km²	71	71
Percentage of **terrestrial** protected areas network in landscapes >500 km²	81	81

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	**2014/15**	**2015/16**
Percentage of **nearshore** protected areas network in large landscapes >270 km²	57	57
Percentage of **nearshore** protected areas network in landscapes >100 km²	73	73
Percentage of **nearshore** protected areas network in landscapes >50 km²	81	81

In 2015/16, data was collected from 19 sites

** Protected areas network includes all provincially- and federally-designated protected areas.*

The terrestrial thresholds are based on work identifying minimum landscape areas to maintain mammals sensitive to disturbance. In nearshore ecosystems, research indicates that the optimal size of protected areas may be an order of magnitude less than in the terrestrial environment. In 2015/16, there was a decrease of 11 ha in the entire protected area system. The percentage of the system in large protected landscapes has remained constant at 61%.

Monitoring

Monitoring is particularly important during a period of rapid change. It is difficult to predict exactly where and how fast changes are occurring. Monitoring the changes can help illustrate the rate and variability across the province.

Long-term Ecological Monitoring has begun in BC Parks. While the monitoring framework identifies eight biomes that have associated data collection protocols, BC Parks is directly involved in setting up plots and collecting data in five biomes – alpine-subalpine, forest, grassland, and wetland and intertidal. Using standardized protocols, each MA is engaged in setting up plots in two biomes, which will result in approximately 94 permanent plots at full implementation. Approximately half of the sites are monitored annually and the other half is monitored every four years. Therefore, when the program is fully implemented there will be about 57 sites monitored each year.

The program is based on the principles of citizen science and, where applicable, volunteers are involved in the data collection.

Collecting LTEM data logger from Long Lake in Yellowpoint Bog Ecological Reserve

By the end of the 2015/16 fiscal year BC Parks had established 65 sites for which they are responsible. Total number of sitesmonitored in 2015/16 was 32. This compares to 19 in 2014/15 and 30 in 2013/14.

Invasive Species Management

Invasive species are non-native species whose introduction into BC causes economic or environmental damage or harm to human health.

BC Parks completed over 88 projects in 2015/16 to monitor and treat invasive species in parks and protected areas.

BC Parks Invasive Species Program

2015/16 Budget and Treatments

Treatments:	$67,000
Total Budget:	$67,000

Success Story: Managing hawkweed in Monkman Park (Peace Section, Northern Region)

Yellow hawkweed is an aggressive invasive plant that was identified as a threat to Northeast BC in the early 1990s. Although hawkweed is found throughout the Omineca and southern BC, it is relatively new to the Peace. Immediate action and management means a greater chance of containing the invasive plant to the south.

In 2006, a serious infestation of hawkweed was noted in Monkman Park, posing significant risks to the broader ecosystem and the region's agriculture industry. The application of herbicide was necessary to deal with the magnitude of the infestation and the first treatment was applied in the park in 2006.

The use of herbicides in parks is only considered if there is no alternative treatment that has proven to be successful and if there is a significant threat to the ecological integrity of the park, as well as the surrounding area.

In 2016, the front country portion of Monkman Park was treated for yellow hawkweed, which was identified as a regional priority. As a result, the Northern Region allocated half of its annual invasive plant management budget to the treatment. The infestation will be monitored annually and may require several years of effort to treat the park.

Economic and Financial Benefits

Revenues and Operating Expenditures

The parks and protected areas system is the single largest recreation operation in the province. It provides an extensive variety of recreation, commercial and research opportunities.

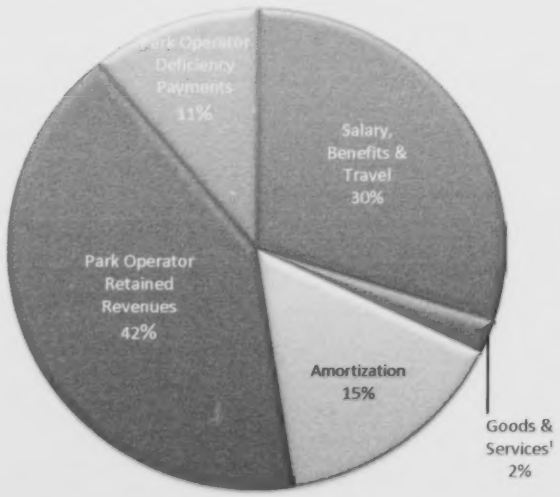
In 2015/16, camping, day use and boating fees (recreation user fees) generated approximately $22 million in revenue. To support park operations' rising costs, an across-the-board fee increase was implemented prior to the start of the 2015 camping season. Frontcountry camping fees were increased by $2 to $5 in most campgrounds. Another $1.4 million was collected from fees for activities requiring PUPs. The majority of these revenues are re-invested in the parks and protected areas system. Most of recreation user fee revenues are retained by POs to help offset operating and contract costs. Park use permit (PUP) revenues are paid into the government's consolidated revenue fund, plus approximately $550,000 from recreation user fee activities.

BC Parks

Revenues & Operating Expenditures 2015/16

BC Parks' Operating Budget (vote): ***$30.2 M***

Total Operating Expenditures (vote plus retained revenue): ***$51.6 M***


Park Operator Deficiency Payments 11%
Salary, Benefits & Travel 30%
Park Operator Retained Revenues 42%
Amortization 15%
Goods & Services[1] 2%

BC Parks Revenues (*in millions*)

Type of Fee	Total		Retained by Park Operators		Paid to Crown	
	2014/15	2015/16	2014/15	2015/16	2014/15	2015/16
Recreation User Fees	$18.5	$22.0	$18.3	$21.4	$0.1	$0.5
Permit Fees	$1.4	$1.4	$0	$0	$1.4	$1.4
Totals	**$20.1**	**$23.4**	**$18.3**	**$21.4**	**$1.5**	**$1.9**

Notes:

- 2014/15 Recreation User Fees - Paid to Crown amount has been revised to reflect updated data.
- All fees paid for the right to use protected areas (PUP fees) are paid into government's consolidated revenue fund.
- Some recreation user fees are also paid into government's consolidated revenue fund. These include: excess camping fees from profitable operations and miscellaneous revenues such as Maquinna Hotspring user fees and some backcountry fees.
- Park Operator Deficiency Payments are public funds provided to POs to cover the portion of operating costs that exceed revenues generated from recreation user fees.

Park Use Permits

PUPs are used to manage various types of commercial, land use and research activities that take place in BC's protected areas system, and ensure that these activities conform to park and protected area values.

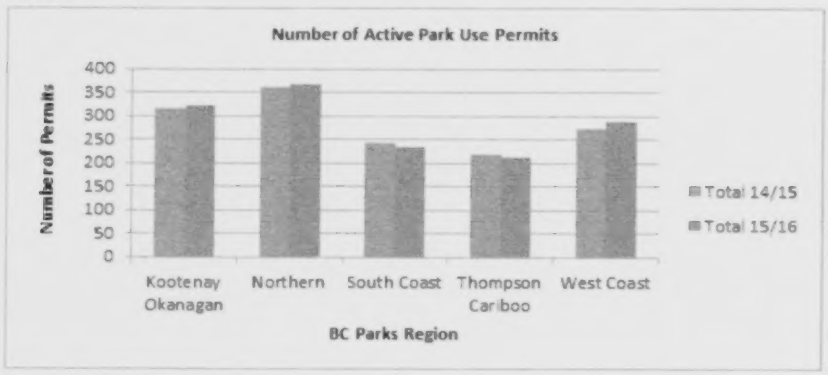
In 2015/16, BC Parks managed 1,419 active permits, covering a wide variety of purposes including commercial recreation, filming, communication sites and research activities. Total PUP revenues were $1.4 million.

Active Park Use Permits

Permit Type	Number of Permits – 2014/15	Number of Permits – 2015/16
Commercial Services	536	554
Land Use Occupancy	531	524
Ecological Reserve	30	26
Trapline	103	100
Film	48	59
Research	141	136
Other	21	20
Total	**1,410**	**1,419**

Notes:

- Numbers do not include Park Operator Permits
- Commercial Service includes recreation, big game, angle guiding and associated structures, transportation, special events and accommodation
- Land Use/Occupancy includes roads, structures, utilities, etc.



Economic Benefits

BC's parks and protected areas generate significant economic benefits for the province by supporting tourism, providing jobs, improving and maintaining population health, and generating tax revenue for government. They also provide affordable vacation options for families.

Provincial parks and protected areas have a substantial impact on the economy and contribute significantly to economic growth. Investment in the parks and protected areas system creates jobs, generates income for local businesses and produces tax revenue for the government.

Investments in the protected areas system by BC Parks and POs generates a significant amount of visitor spending on food, entertainment, transportation and other goods and services, according to the 2011 publication released by the Canadian Parks Council: *The Economic Impact of Canada's National, Provincial and Territorial Parks in 2009* .

In May 2015, the Canadian Camping and RV Council, alongside the Camping RV BC Coalition, released a report titled *Economic Impact and Trend Analysis of the Canadian Camping Industry*, which quantifies the impact of camping and RVing in BC and Canada. The report found that campgrounds stimulate economic activity and create jobs for Canadians in urban and rural areas across the country. Over 5.7 million Canadian adults camp each year and the camping industry contributes a total of $4.7 billion annually to Canada's economy, as well as creating the equivalent of 60,000 full-time jobs.

Local, inter-provincial, and international visitors are drawn to the many spectacular places that are managed and protected by BC Parks. Approximately one quarter of BC Parks visitors are non-residents, making BC Parks comparable to a provincial exporting industry. Park visitors bring significant economic benefit and development to the surrounding communities.

BC Parks also protect many ecological services that have economic value. For example, the conservation of ecosystem biodiversity results in air and water purification and regulation of floods and climate. BC Parks also provides opportunities for accessible outdoors activities. Nature related recreation is recognized as an important factor in maintaining population health.

As one of the largest providers of overnight accommodation in the province, BC's provincial parks system provides families with more affordable vacationing options relative to hotels, and the revenues from vacationing in BC Parks are kept within the province and reinvested in our park system.

For more information on BC Parks and the protected areas system including information in this report, please visit the ***BC Parks website*****.**